



P.O. Box 317 Mt. Shasta CA 96067 USA
Tel +1 510 549 3774
FAX +1 530 926 0698
LARRY.MARKS@BARBERRY.COM

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Federal Communications Commission
Via E-mail

Re: WT 05-235

Dear Commissioners:

I support the proposal by the FCC to discontinue the International Morse Code elements of the amateur radio licensing examination.

I have been a licensed amateur radio operator for 48 years, most of that time as an Amateur Extra Class licensee. I had to pass 5, 13 and 20 WPM elements in order to obtain my license, and for me that was certainly the most difficult part of the examination process.

When I was first licensed, CW was licensed for commercial use and was widely used for emergency communications. However, new communications modes have eliminated the need for CW. It is no longer commercially licensed nor widely used even in emergencies.

I greatly value having learned the code and I use it regularly in my amateur communications. There are and probably always will be many who, like me, enjoy CW. But I simply do not believe that CW is so critical to modern radio that it should be a required element of an amateur exam.

I believe that amateur radio is still an important and necessary service for technology development and public service. And I believe that it should be subject to strong licensing requirements that demonstrate the ability of the licensee to perform those functions. Accordingly, I would like to see the written tests strengthened to include more on public service communications and on digital communications modes. I think it is fair to ask prospective licensees to learn these things because they are contemporary and relevant.

Retaining the CW licensing requirement, however, would prove a barrier to the growth of Amateur Radio, as the casual observer would regard it as merely some kind of rite of passage, having no relevance to modern communications. Tough exams will not stop the kind of people we would value as fellow amateurs. Having a CW exam, however, may well.

Sincerely,

Larry J. Marks, W6VTJ